

Yun Wang

THE BOOK OF TOTALITY

*Chapter I*

SHARD

I let myself fall  
I dig with my fingers  
into a hole  
Mud and gravel fall in my face  
The earth closes in on me

I don't stop when my nails break  
I miss the sound of birds  
I dig toward a hint of light

Each time a new light  
strips me naked

WHISPERS

Alto: seasons. A face with a faint moustache above the firm upper lip.  
The scent of fresh ripe fruits and rotten leaves.

Mezzo: crescents. A face brimming with ecliptic dreams.  
Dark eyes gather the stars. The scent of lilacs and firewood.

Soprano: sand. A marble face hewed to translucence.  
She has entered the gate of childbirth, and become a statue.

## CONDENSATION

An imaginary cat  
licks her feet at midnight.

At midnight, the woman  
who has been herself all day  
(charting the stars,  
cooking, doing dishes,  
tending to her child)  
turns into someone else.

Someone who cannot lift  
her gaze from the moon.  
Someone who sits in the empty  
kitchen, weeping.

One day the cat will materialize.  
Everyone will leave her.

*Chapter II*

TRANSMUTATION IN THE TRAIN

He said his bones were brittle as glass.  
He told her he had to be careful.

She said you must be from another planet  
on the other side of the Galaxy.

He agreed. She told him she is always right.  
He said I am not used to you yet.

Her ears burst with the mews  
of her imaginary cat, dying to put  
its soft paws on his imaginary cat.

His cat turned into a beagle at the scent  
of a new passenger, a tall Ukrainian woman  
with very gray eyes.

## MIRAGES OF INDISCRETION

The man in a wheelchair contemplated Wagner and the shrinking death of stars.  
Warps in the fabric of space and time.

*You contemplate cherry blossoms on my blouse.*

The wife conjured Helen and Paris from silenced scripts.  
Her lover lit a French cigarette, stood beneath red oaks outside the house.

*You traveled three continents with a backpack. I dream of women you assisted.*

The nurse cried watching *Days of Our Lives*, plucked a rose from the garden.  
The man contemplated a white rose in a pink vase.

*You quote Nietzsche to mock my theory of the cosmos.*

The man divorced his wife of thirty-six years, married his nurse.  
You gave up astronomy in disgust, entered medical school in a desert.

## THE KNOT

For the last time I imagine  
clothing you in black leather  
I watch you ride away  
on a shining motorcycle  
with a woman sitting behind you  
Someone you touched when she smiled  
hugs tightly to your waist

*You touched me when I wept  
I saw aurora-lit sky  
What was your excuse*

Someone else sits alone in a gas station  
curtained in needles of ice  
He draws with his finger on the window  
my name in Egyptian hieroglyphs  
Your approach rips open  
the smooth dance of snow  
He puts on a pair of sunglasses  
Your girlfriend winks at him  
when you turn to pump the gas

Black wings open once  
then close for all eternity

*Chapter III*TO THE ALIEN LISTENING  
THROUGH THE GALACTIC WORMHOLE

Endless bamboo forests breathe  
with scarlet orchids.  
Will you cross the Galaxy to see  
a blue planet waltzing around  
a golden star?

Will you ride with the light to hear  
sidereal tides rehearse  
algae-green incantations,  
the wind's whisper over  
moonlit graveyards?

Will you descend from the invisible  
ladder in the sky  
to see the giant star vanish?  
A blinding diamond ring  
encircles the invisible star.

## CONCEPTION

The unnamed flowers close dead tight, the rain erases a collage of footprints.  
They wait for ten or twenty years, to shed their seeds.

Within a lead sarcophagus, men in Mylar costumes search for the missing  
nuclear fuel that could feed a second chain reaction.

And the aliens, said to be small and with egg-size dark eyes, could be conducting  
biological experiments.

When the fire comes, the flowers open again, glow slowly into ashes.  
The seeds remain. There will be little parachutes.

## TOTAL SOLAR ECLIPSE

The black bowl of sky  
fills with birds  
going home to sleep.

If you seek the sun  
you will go blind.

You look down, your feet  
feel the pulsing veins of Earth.

Light begins to spill  
from the bottom of sky.  
The horizon is dark.  
Venus blazes on the white shoulder  
of Jupiter.